

# COMMUNIST TAKEOVER AND OCCUPATION OF BYELORUSSIA

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SPECIAL REPORT NO. 9

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE  
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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H. Res. 346 and H. Res. 438



DECEMBER 31, 1954.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House  
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HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE COMMUNIST  
AGGRESSION AND THE FORCED INCORPORATION OF THE  
BALTIC STATES INTO THE U. S. S. R.

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## INTRODUCTION

The committee wishes to express its appreciation for assistance in the preparation of this report to Georgetown University, its faculty, and to the group of experts from various parts of the United States who cooperated with the university. The record of hearings of the committee, together with individual sworn depositions from eye-witnesses, documents, exhibits, and other authoritative evidence formed the basis for this report.

The purpose of this report is to telescope the essentials of the history of Byelorussia and its people; including the period of Communist takeover and occupation of that nation. It is hoped that this report will help the American people to understand better the nations and people enslaved by communism and thereby to more fully appreciate the true nature, tactics, and final objectives of the criminal conspiracy of world communism.



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Mr. KERSTEN of Wisconsin, from the Select Committee on Communist  
Aggression, submitted the following

## R E P O R T

[Pursuant to H. Res. 346 and H. Res. 438]



## COMMUNIST TAKEOVER AND OCCUPATION OF BYELORUSSIA

Byelorussia (White Ruthenia) first attracted world attention when the Soviet Union demanded that the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic be admitted as a charter member to the United Nations. This does not mean that we are dealing with a latecomer to the family of nations—quite the contrary! Byelorussia played a great part in the medieval history of eastern Europe. Under the conditions of the time and the changes in nomenclature of the various lands, Byelorussia appeared and played its role in the old state of Kievan Rus' and later in the Grand Principality of Lithuania.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, since the course of history had thrown the entire area inhabited by the Byelorussians into the Russian Empire, it was relatively easy for the Russians to persuade the world that Byelorussian was only a Russian dialect which could be eliminated for the good of international understanding. The folly of this conception is easy to see and the efforts of both the Russian Czars and the Soviet Union to destroy the Byelorussian consciousness are now very clear.

### THE NAME AND LANGUAGE

From the time when the word Rus' was first introduced as a general term for the population in the neighborhood of Kiev, the term Byelorussia was applied to those people who were living to the north and west, although in the 11th and 12th centuries their land extended much farther to the west, into the northeastern part of what is now Poland.

When the term Ruthenia was introduced into Latin as the equivalent of Rus', these people became known as Alba Ruthenia, or White Ruthenians. This phrase in its English translation, White Ruthenia—sometimes written as a single word, Whiteruthenia—is still in wide circulation in English references to them.

The language is one of the East Slavic languages. The actual history of the origin of the language, as in the case of Ukrainian and to a lesser degree Russian, has been obscured by the fact that the country received its Christianity primarily from Constantinople through Kiev and along with this came the Church Slavic language, a Balkan tongue which had become the ecclesiastical language of the Orthodox Slavs.

### THE TERRITORY AND POPULATION

The Byelorussian territory lies in between western and eastern Europe. It does not touch either the Baltic or the Black Sea, but it includes the headwaters of those rivers which flow into the Baltic and also the Dnieper. This fact has determined the history of the country.



Its population approximates 10 million. In addition to this, there are about 4 million Byelorussians in the Federated Russian Republic and close to a million distributed among the People's Republic of Poland, the Lithuanian S. S. R. and the Latvian S. S. R. This makes Byelorussians in European U. S. S. R. the third largest nation after the Russians and the Ukrainians, and the majority of the Byelorussians live in the Byelorussian S. S. R. The present capital of the B. S. S. R. is Minsk.

In religion the overwhelming mass of the Byelorussians are Orthodox. There is a Roman Catholic minority in the western districts which were on the Polish border and there are small numbers of Protestants, chiefly Baptists and Methodists.

#### HISTORY OF THE BYELORUSSIAN NATION

We do not need to dwell on the prehistoric times of the country. As in the case of the other East Slavic peoples, we cannot be sure when they entered the area, but by the middle of the ninth century the outlines of the present population were set and the Byelorussian tribes were already in a fairly high state of development, practicing agriculture, many crafts, and engaging in domestic and foreign trade.

In this period two main centers emerged, Novgorod among the Slovenes (not to be confused with the people in the Dinaric Alps) in the north, and Kiev in the south. The princes of Polotsk on Byelorussian territory seem to have occupied a central position and perhaps dominated all the Krivichi and perhaps other tribes such as the Dregovich, Radimichi, Vyatichi, and Severyane, who appear to have been the ancestors of the modern Byelorussians.

The rulers gradually became more definite figures with the first appearance of the Kievan State (early Ukraine). Volodymyr the Great (980-1015), before embracing Christianity in this state, was a pagan. He defeated Vseslav, the Prince of Polotsk, and then married as one of his many wives Vseslav's daughter, Rahnieda. Before his death he made Izyaslav (his son by Rahnieda) the Prince of Polotsk and from this time the princes of Polotsk remained in the family of Vseslav with relatively loose bonds to the great state of Kievan Rus'.

Later there were established principalities in Seversk and Smolensk, which gradually also emancipated themselves from the rule of Kiev. Other Byelorussian principalities were Vilnia and Grodno farther to the west, and Slutsk, Kletsk, Turan, and Pinsk in the south. The principality of Polotsk still remained the center and under the more able princes it extended its domain over some of the Baltic tribes and nearly to the Baltic Sea. Thus for the most part it was the Byelorussian who had the closest connection with the Baltic tribes.

The Kievan Rus' state was a rather free organization with great autonomy of the local principalities, and after a few generations these individual principalities became almost independent and able to defy the will of the Grand Prince of Kiev. Culturally and religiously they were Christianized, following the conversion of Volodymyr, and accepted as the pattern of their Christian culture that of Constantinople and the Church Slavonic language. This left its mark upon the Byelorussian people, and explains the reason for their Orthodox religion.



With the extinction of the line of the Vseslavovichs in the middle of the 13th century, a tendency toward unity found new expression in the appearance of Mindovg, the son of Ryngold, Prince of Navagradak, which had previously formed a part of the principality of Polotsk. Mindovg brought under his control the principalities of Grodno, Gorodets, and Vilnia, and also Slonim and Volkovysk. He added the regions of Brest and Melnits, and was later recognized by Polotsk. He succeeded in placing his relatives on the thrones of Polotsk, Vitebsk, and the cities of Smolensk, and extended his power over the principality of Pinsk. To this he added the Zhmudi, the ancestors of the modern Lithuanians.

The actual relations between Mindovg and the various princely houses is still uncertain. In some way he effected a union of the Byelorussian lands with the kernel of the modern Lithuania. It was done without fighting to any extent and seems to have been a more or less natural process. In 1217 he appeared as one of a number of chieftains. By 1240 he had become the acknowledged head of a state, and it was due to him that Byelorussia was spared the horrors of the Mongol invasion, for he defeated the section of the horde that was invading the area.

Mindovg was apparently a pagan, but in order to maintain his hold over the western areas, he had himself baptized in 1250, and by sending his own envoys to Rome he succeeded in being crowned king in 1253 with the approval of Pope Innocent IV. In 1263, after an uprising of the Zhmudi, he was murdered by his son and the revolt was put down by another son, Voyshelk.

A chaotic period ensued. In 1316 Gedimin (or Gediman) ascended the throne and reigned until 1341. It was he who established Vilnia as the formal capital in the so-called "Kriviy City" and built a castle there. Vilnia was far to the west in the Byelorussian lands, but it was convenient for a prince who was conducting in all respects a double state in which the organization of the Byelorussian princes with their culture, language, organized church and law were positive features of the regime. Unfortunately this situation involved the Byelorussians in the squabbles between the Lithuanians and the Teutonic Order.

When Gedimin was killed in combat in the western lands, there came another period of discord until his son Olgerd established himself in Vilnia and succeeded in bringing into his realm all of the Ukrainian principalities except Halych (Galicia), which had fallen to the king of Poland after a long struggle. Olgerd relied very heavily upon the Byelorussians. He made their language the state language, recognized the council of their princes as almost the highest body in the principality, and had 10 of his 12 sons brought up as Orthodox. He devoted himself to the well-being of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian lands, guarding them against the attacks of the Tartars and also against the attacks of the princes of Moscow. The latter, now for the first time, began to cast envious eyes on the Byelorussian lands, and after the wars in 1362 and 1367, Moscow was compelled to set the border near Mozhaysk and Kolomna.

In the meantime, Olgerd's brother, Keystut (probably under the title of Prince of Troki, west of Vilnia) dealt chiefly with the affairs of the Lithuanians and handled most of the continuous clashes with the Teutonic Order and with the Roman Catholic Poles to the south.



Thus for more than a century Byelorussia existed as a state within the Grand Principality of Lithuania in what was a very unusual system.

In addition to this, the Orthodox Church was so well organized and strong that it desired its own separate administration. In 1317, with the approval of the Byzantine Emperor, Andronikos the Elder, an Autocephalous Byelorussian Metropolitanate was set up in Navagradak. Olgerd requested from Constantinople that this new metropolitan receive the title of Metropolitan of All Rus' and take over the supervision and jurisdiction of the Metropolitanates of Halych, Kiev, and even Moscow. In 1354 the Patriarch of Constantinople gave the title to both Roman of Navagradak and Aleksey of Moscow.

This delicate balance which had prevailed since the time of Mindovg was rudely interrupted in 1377 by the death of Olgerd and the succession of his son Jahayla. At this moment the situation in Roman Catholic Poland was serious. After the death of King Louis of Hungary, who was also King of Poland, the heir to the Polish throne was his young daughter, Jadwiga. After an interregnum the Poles decided to elect her to the Polish throne provided she would marry Jahayla and combine the two regions.

Under this plan, which was decided upon after long discussion, Jahayla became King of Poland; the Grand Principality was connected with Poland, with its internal organization remaining intact. This internal situation was radically altered by the Union of Lublin in 1569. This measure, forced through by the Polish magnates, formed the two states into one with a common king elected at a joint diet, common money, and the right of all citizens to settle in either section of the country. Each section, however, was to have a separate administration, treasury, and army, and the right to its own language and religion; Orthodox for the Byelorussians and Roman Catholic for the Poles, the Lithuanian Zhmudi, and other tribes converted to Roman Catholicism.

In the meantime, since the beginning of the 15th century the czars of Moscow had cast envious eyes upon the Byelorussian lands, and under the reign of Ivan the Terrible there was a long series of wars as the czar sought more and more areas and claimed for his control all the lands of Byelorussia and Ukraine. In these wars the Grand Principality, especially its Byelorussian section in the east, was frightfully ravaged by the uncultured and barbaric Muscovite hordes. It weakened the position of the Grand Principality and also created sharp distinctions between the various nobles and magnates.

On the other hand, the connection with Poland, tenuous as it was from the beginning, led to an aggravation of the quarrels between the Roman Catholics and the Byelorussian and Ukrainian Orthodox. These took a more virulent form when in 1561 Gothard Kettler, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, accepted Lutheranism, secularized the order, and became Duke of Courland and Semigallia under the Grand Prince of Lithuania. This made it possible for the newly established Protestantism to enter the Grand Principality and add to the religious disturbances. This move was countered by the appearance of the Jesuits in Poland.

With the Jesuits many of the new ideas of the Renaissance had entered Poland. The new Jesuit colleges offered an unusual mixture of the older and newer ideas, and slowly but surely, the Orthodox



nobles began to send their children to these modern schools, with the result that many of them tended to accept the Roman Catholic faith and to adopt Polish manners and modes of thinking.

This encouraged controversy. The controversy was deepened by the union of the Orthodox and Roman Catholics achieved at Brest, in 1596. After this, fighting flared up not only between the Polish Catholics and Orthodoxy but within the Orthodox Church as well, and it was not until the time of Petro Mohyla, who became Metropolitan of Kiev in 1632 and in the Kievan Mohyla's Academy that a way was found of associating Orthodoxy and the new European culture and that the bitter feuds began to die down.

The 17th century was an age of confusion. The Kings of Sweden were aspiring to the control of Poland and the Grand Principality; the Poles were trying to strengthen their position by putting pressure on the Orthodox; Moscow was endeavoring to gather in the remaining Slavic principalities; and the Turks and Crimean Tatars were exercising their hand in the political situation to the discomfiture of all parties.

The revolt of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, Hetman of the Zaporozhian Kozaks, the kernel of the Ukrainian movement, flared up against Poland in 1648 and temporarily relieved the situation. But under the interplay of the forces that were aroused, he felt himself obliged in 1654 to establish contacts with Czar Aleksey Mikhaylovich by the Treaty of Pereyaslav, and soon learned that his hopes were doomed to disappointment. When he died in 1658, the discord among his successors made it possible for the Czar to interfere actively and to establish his control over the Kozaks and the Ukrainians east of the Dnieper, and to divide, by an alliance with Poland, the Ukrainians and gradually bring them under his own control.

In the three partitions of Poland from 1772 to 1795, Russia took over all the Byelorussian parts of the Grand Principality. They at once put into practice their traditional theory that they offered the standard on which both Byelorussians and Ukrainians should base their lives. They immediately started a campaign of Russification and by their military power tried to enforce obedience and submission.

There was a brief intermission in 1812 when Napoleon during his invasion of Russia tried to revive the old Grand Principality. The attempt was received with enthusiasm by the Byelorussians, but the defeat of Napoleon doomed the plan and the entire population of the Grand Principality was left to the tender mercies of the Russian imperial system.

The introduction of ever harsher methods of control over all the inhabitants of the Grand Principality and the efforts to stamp out the Byelorussian language and usages from the Orthodox Church in these areas led to many frequent uprisings. In the generally known Polish revolts of 1831 and 1863, the Byelorussian peasants and nobles actively participated, but were unable to oppose successfully the Russian power, even though in the movement of 1863, there were at one time 75,000 Byelorussian peasants with their primitive arms engaged in the revolt. Their leader, Kastus Kalinowski, editor and publisher of the first Byelorussian newspaper, *Muzyckaya Pravda*, was finally captured and hanged in Vilna on March 23, 1864. These events led to new restrictions, and despite the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the people obtained no real relaxation or improvement of their condition.



Nevertheless, there emerged a growing interest in ethnology and language. Even Russian scholars began to interest themselves in the details of Byelorussian life and language. When this movement spread to include some of the Byelorussian youth, some volumes were printed in the Byelorussian language abroad and smuggled into the homeland. Thus, there grew up a new conception of the Byelorussian nationality which was to bear fruit in later years.

In 1902 some of the Byelorussian students in St. Petersburg established the Byelorussian Revolutionary Party. This began to spread through the country and underground literature was widely distributed. In 1903 the Byelorussian Revolutionary Party held a congress in Vilnia and called for the autonomy of Byelorussia with a Diet in Vilnia. At the same time it changed its name to the Byelorussian Socialist Hramada. In 1904 the Byelorussian students in Warsaw founded another Byelorussian Socialist Party and in 1905 the Byelorussian Peasant Union was organized.

That year a revolution broke out in Russia against the autocracy of the Czar. This gave an opportunity for all the non-Russian nations to express their opposition with, and apart from, the movement as it developed in the purely Russian areas. This, of course, was only a forerunner of 1917 but it did result in a lessening of some of the restrictions. In September 1906 the first legal Byelorussian newspaper, *Nasha Dola*, began to appear. But this was short-lived as the police soon thereafter confiscated all six numbers that had been published.

However, another organ appeared later, known as *Nasha Niva*—Our Field—which continued until 1915 and played a great role in the Byelorussian revival. The paper gathered the Byelorussian intelligentsia, writers and poets, and on its pages appeared the first works of M. Bahdanovich, Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas, Ales Harum, Maksim Haretsky, Vlast, and others.

In St. Petersburg there developed out of the illegal student circle and at the initiative of V. Ivanovsky a book-publishing group. Two Byelorussian publishing firms and bookstores appeared in Vilnia and another in Minsk. Then in 1907 there was held a congress of Byelorussian teachers which founded the Byelorussian Teachers Society and raised the demand for the introduction of the Byelorussian language in the schools. The movement spread to the Catholic Byelorussians in the Vilnia Catholic Seminary and the Catholic Religious Academy in St. Petersburg. In 1913 a Catholic Byelorussian journal was started. Also, Byelorussian cooperatives were established, and in 1912 an agricultural journal appeared in Minsk in the Byelorussian language. In the arts, a Byelorussian theater was established in 1910.

#### WORLD WAR I AND THE BYELORUSSIAN REVOLUTION

In opposition to this general movement, which was linked with the revolutionary Russian parties, the Government tried to create a counterpropaganda and authorized the publication of its own papers in Byelorussia but without much success. The beginning of World War I in 1914 led the Government to more severe measures against the movement. As the German armies advanced into Byelorussia, it tried to move the population eastward and to institute more and more rigid controls.



After the Germans captured Vilnia, the Byelorussian leaders resumed their constructive political work in spite of German restrictions. In 1915 there was established in Vilnia a Confederation of the Grand Principality of Lithuania at the initiative of these leaders. This consisted of Byelorussians, Lithuanians, and representatives of the national minorities. It issued on December 19, 1915, a universal in which it put forward the demand that all Byelorussian and Lithuanian lands formerly in the Grand Principality should be formed into a separate state. This failed because of the fear of the Lithuanians that they would be swamped by sheer numbers in such a federation. It was answered by the Poles who asked for a federation of Poles, Byelorussians, and Lithuanians, but this proposition evoked no enthusiasm.

The Germans, in spite of their military control, allowed the Byelorussians more freedom than they enjoyed under Russia. They permitted the use of the Byelorussian language for instruction in schools. Soon there were 200 Byelorussian schools in the occupied territory and a teachers' seminary. This national movement grew especially after January 16, 1916, when Field Marshal von Hindenburg ordered that the Byelorussian language should receive all rights and be accepted as an official language in public life.

When the Russian Revolution broke out in Petrograd in February 1917 and the Provisional Government was established, there was more opportunity for work in the Byelorussian territory still under Russian control. In March 1917, there was held in Minsk a congress of the Byelorussian Socialist Hromada which called for the reorganization of the Russian Empire as a federative state, with Byelorussia as one of these and enjoying autonomy. On March 25-27, all the existing Byelorussian organizations held a conference proclaiming the same demands, and created a Byelorussian National Committee. In July another conference was held and the Byelorussian National Committee was changed to the Central Rada of Byelorussian Organizations and Parties.

During the summer, with the growing disorganization of the Russian Army, Byelorussian military organizations began to appear and these in turn founded a Central Byelorussian Military Rada to supervise and direct their own movements.

In October 1917, the Central Rada of Byelorussian Organizations and Parties took the name of the Great Byelorussian Rada and declared itself the national representative of the Byelorussian people. These tendencies toward a growing realization of the individual identity of the Byelorussian nation were again countered in Petrograd by the formation under the Bolsheviks of a Byelorussian District Committee at the Russian Soviet of Deputies of Peasants and Workers. This committee, however, did not have the support of the Byelorussian people.

To determine finally the question of the political and state form of Byelorussia and to settle the question connected with this, the Great Byelorussian Rada determined to call a general national representation in the form of the First All-Byelorussian Congress. This met in Minsk on December 5, 1917. It was attended by 1,872 delegates chosen democratically and representing all Byelorussian organizations and political parties. From both the social and territorial points of view, there can be no doubt of the genuinely national character of the Congress.



After twelve days the Congress adopted by an over-whelming majority a resolution which underwrote the right of nations to self-determination and the establishment in Byelorussia of a republican-democratic government in the form of the Byelorussia National Republic (BNR). Thus the First All-Byelorussian Congress became the constituent assembly of Byelorussia, and assumed responsibility for the fate of the nation.

Although the Congress, taking into account the political retardation of the people as a result of their long enslavement, did not, in the first stage of its activity, decide as yet on a complete break with Russia in the progress of the national and political rebirth of the Byelorussian people, it did play a basic role. Its resolutions were the first link in the chain of the evolutionary development of independent Byelorussian thought. The Russian Communists understood the danger that it presented to their aggressive plans, and in the night of December 30-31, 1917, upon the order of the Supreme Commissar of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the Northwest District, surrounded the building of the city theater where the Congress was sitting with Red army units, equipped with machine guns and armored cars. Led by Krivoshein, they broke up the Congress. By this act Byelorussia became one of the first victims of the unprovoked aggression of Red Moscow.

The next day, the Congress reconvened and delegated its rights and full powers to a Rada of 71 members, which in turn chose an executive committee to serve as the leadership in the formation of a Byelorussian state. It immediately applied itself to the task of forming the national armed forces, the lack of which had been so painfully felt and had so disastrously affected events. The 289th Infantry Regiment, 75 percent of it Byelorussian in composition, was moved to Minsk and purged of unreliable elements (Russians) in general preparation for an armed struggle with the Bolsheviks. These plans met with disaster when the Commander of Minsk, Rezacky, seized the leaders of the Rada and the Central Military Rada on the night of January 31, 1918.

Shortly, the leaders of the Central Military Rada, Col. K. Ezavitau and Staff Captains V. Zakharka and Mamonka, succeeded in fleeing from the Bolshevik prison and resumed their armed preparations. On February 19, 1918, Minsk was cleared of the Bolsheviks and the executive committee of the All-Byelorussian Congress took over the Government. Among the military units which took part in this was the First Byelorussian Minsk Regiment under the command of Radkievich and F. Zdanovich. Two days later, the executive committee issued the First Constitutional Decree and formed the first Government of the Republic.

On February 25, 1918, Minsk was occupied by the eastward-moving German Army. The Byelorussian military units were disarmed. The German occupying authorities did not recognize the Rada and the Government of the B. N. R. *de jure*, but were tolerant of them and did not interfere in the work of the civil administration. They honored the documents of the Rada and the Government and thus recognized the Government of the B. N. R. *de facto*.

On March 9, 1918, the executive committee of the Rada of the First All Byelorussian Congress issued the second constitutional decree, juridically a declaration of independence, which reads in part:



During the World War, which has overthrown some governments and weakened others, Byelorussia has awakened to state life. After 3½ centuries of slavery the Byelorussian people proclaim to the entire world that they are living and will live. The Great National All Byelorussian Congress of December 5-17, 1917, caring for the fate of the Byelorussian people, has established on their land a republican system. Carrying out the will of the Congress and protecting the state rights of the people, the executive committee of the Rada of the Congress thus decrees on the state order of Byelorussia and the rights and freedoms of its inhabitants and peoples.

This relatively rapid evolution of the state ideology among the active Byelorussian political workers in Minsk was hastened by events which in the meantime were taking place in the political and cultural center of western Byelorussia, Vilnia, which was separated from the central and eastern areas of Byelorussia by the rigid line of the front and then, after the occupation of Minsk by the Germans, by the no less rigid frontier of the military administrative division.

The second constitutional decree established first the provisional form of the Byelorussian National Republic (B. N. R.) so as to create its complete independent statehood. The further action of the Rada and its executive committee was only the logical result of the situation created by the second constitutional decree. On March 19, 1918, the Rada of the All-Byelorussian Congress broadened its membership by taking in representatives of the cities and zemstvos (counties) and became the Rada of the Byelorussian National Republic. Of the national minorities that entered into the Rada, there were 7 Jews, 4 Poles, 2 Russians, 1 Ukrainian, and 1 Lithuanian. A presidium was set up consisting of Dr. I. Syerada, Y. Varonka, and K. Ezavitau. On March 23, the Rada was joined by representatives of the Vilnia Byelorussian Rada.

Then, on March 25, 1918, the Rada of the Byelorussian National Republic solemnly proclaimed the independence of Byelorussia and published the third constitutional decree containing the official proclamation. All the Byelorussian political parties, representatives of the Jewish parties, Poalej Syon and Bund, and the representatives of the Polish Socialist Party headed by Prystor, the future Prime Minister of Poland, voted in support of this act. Votes opposed were cast by the Russian Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) and the Russian Socialist Revolutionists (Esers), who formed part of some delegations of a few cities and zemstvos. These even withdrew from the Rada of the B. N. R.

The Byelorussian Government quickly set to work to expand its activity in all fields of national life, with the exception of the military. The Germans forbade this. In spite of great difficulties connected with the war and the devastation of the country, the Government made significant advances in the fields of education, culture, social protection, etc.

It was also very active in the international field, trying to secure recognition from other states and opening up diplomatic and consular offices in a series of countries. The Byelorussian National Republic was recognized *de jure* by Austria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. It was recognized *de facto* by Bulgaria, Denmark, France, and Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the majority of the Entente countries were indifferent.



With the withdrawal of the German armies in November 1918, the Red army began to advance into Byelorussia. Not having sufficient armed forces to oppose it, the Government moved to Grodno. On December 10, 1918, the Red army took Minsk and established there the government of military revolutionary committees.

While in Grodno, the Government continued its efforts to form armed Byelorussian forces to defend the independence and indivisibility of the country. In its struggle at this time, it found an ally in Lithuania, which had proclaimed its independence on February 16, 1918. The Government concluded agreements with Lithuania for friendship and mutual aid.

The Polish-Bolshevik War ended with a treaty between the warring powers in Riga on March 18, 1921, and by this Byelorussia was divided between Poland and Soviet Russia. The former secured a third of Byelorussia with a population of about three and a half million. The rest, with the exception of the part that fell to Latvia, came under the rule of Moscow.

#### BYELORUSSIA UNDER BOLSHEVIK OCCUPATION

During the Revolution, the Communist Party in Byelorussia practically did not exist as far as the native population was concerned. Its few members were recruited chiefly from the non-Byelorussian urban proletariat, stirred up by Communist agitators sent in from Russia. This is even confirmed by the official name. The party was not named the Byelorussian Communist Party or even the Communist Party of Byelorussia, but the northwest branch of the RKP (Russian Communist Party).

The party was eventually founded, as stated by the present secretary of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, T. Gorbunov, by Comrades M. V. Frunze, A. F. Myasnikow, and L. M. Kaganovich. The same Gorbunov says: "The Soviet Government in Byelorussia was established as the result of a severe war with the local nationalists" (T. Gorbunov, *The Union of the Byelorussian People in One Socialist State* [Ogiz-Gospolizdat, 1948], p. 8).

The dynamic growth of its national political consciousness compelled the Bolsheviks to revise their policy toward Byelorussia. As attested to by A. Chervyakov, former president of the central committee of the Communist Party in Byelorussia (Byelorussia to the Tenth Anniversary of the Revolution [Minsk, 1927]), the sixth northwestern local conference of the Russian Communist Party in Smolensk, December 26, 1918, "resolved that it stood for the establishment of an independent Byelorussian Republic." Then the northwestern regional division of the Russian Communist Party assumed the name Communist Party of Byelorussia and chose a central bureau with some Byelorussian members under D. Zylunovich. Finally, the first congress of the Communist Party of Byelorussia proclaimed on January 1, 1919, the "independence" of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (B. S. S. R.) with a government headed by D. Zylunovich.

Behind this facade of independence, W. Knorin, the first secretary of the party in Byelorussia during 1920-24, wrote: "The union of the laboring mass in Byelorussia for further struggle for the world



revolution against the capitalists and landowners was the first slogan and the first principle of the proclamation of the B. S. S. R. on January 1, 1919" (Remarks on the History of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Byelorussia [Minsk, 1934]). In paragraph 5 of the constitution accepted by the first congress on February 6, 1919, it is said:

The Byelorussian Republic is a free Socialist community of all the workers of Byelorussia. The whole government in the borders of the B. S. S. R. belongs to the laboring people of this country, united in Soviets of cities and villages.

The Congress declared definitely that—

\* \* \* the independent Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic will be recognized by all peoples, as it is by the brotherly Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic. The Congress urges all peoples and their governments to enter without delay into direct contact with the Byelorussian S. S. R.

Even juridically, until January 16, 1921, the B. S. S. R. was absolutely unconnected with the Federated Russian Republic. Then a juridical relationship between the two republics was further emphasized and more accurately spelled out by an "agreement" between them, calling for general military and state union.

The next step in tightening the bonds between the republics was taken on December 30, 1922, with the creation of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. This juridical fixation of mutual relations between the B. S. S. R. and the other non-Russian republics and the R. S. F. S. R. found its culmination in Stalin's Constitution of the U. S. S. R. of December 5, 1936, and the Constitution of the B. S. S. R. of March 19, 1937, which was based on the former. It is completely superfluous to mention the illusory nature and the exclusive paper character of these relations and constitutions in general.

In reality, from the first days of the existence of the B. S. S. R. to the present time, the entire Government of this Republic has rested in the hands of the Russian Communist Party and to the last detail of public life has been controlled and directed by Moscow. Its application to the Byelorussian people has depended almost exclusively on the international position and internal situation of Soviet Russia. When Soviet Russia is successful in international and internal prospects, then the pressure of the Kremlin becomes unbearable and vice versa.

#### THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY (NEP)

With growing internal instabilities and economic chaos in 1921-22 Moscow receded from the Communist line and introduced the new economic policy (NEP, 1922-28). It was extended to Byelorussia partly because of the dissatisfaction of the population, expressed in passive opposition and active outbreaks against the Communist Government in a series of armed uprisings.

The NEP was not limited merely to events of an economic character, but included certain concessions to the national culture, education, etc. Moscow made these concessions very unwillingly and did so only because of prevailing conditions in Byelorussia and the sections of the local Communist Party, in which there were at least some Byelorussians. Part of the Byelorussian intelligentsia, taking account of political reality, entered the ranks of the Communist Party and under its protection tried to exploit the situation in broadening the national culture and deepening the national consciousness of the



Byelorussian masses. Yet the participation of Byelorussians in the party was still insignificant, amounting to no more than 3,000 over these years.

Under the capable leadership of the People's Commissar for Education, Prof. U. Ihnatouski, a great number of Byelorussian public and high schools were established for general and vocational education. By 1927-28 there were functioning in the B. S. S. R. 5,186 public schools with 359,390 pupils and 361 high schools with 127,690 students. Also, in 1921, for the first time in modern Byelorussian history, there was founded in Minsk a Byelorussian State University, the rector of which was a well-known scholar and historian, U. Picheta. The Agricultural Academy in Horki resumed its work, and in 1922 the Institute of Byelorussian Culture was established. Thanks to the work of such Byelorussian scholars as Dounar-Zapolski, Karski, Picheta, Ihnatouski, Buzuk, Shchekatsichin, Dauhiala, Smolich, and others, the institute became an important scientific institution which produced a long series of valuable books in history, archeology, philology, etc. Here, too, was organized a Byelorussian Society for Cultural Relations Abroad, which established contacts with foreign scientific circles, took part in international scientific conferences, and arranged for such conferences in Minsk.

Byelorussian literature began to flourish. Besides the poets who were already in good repute, like Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Cishka Hartny, and others, whose works played an important role in the national revival of the Byelorussian people, there appeared a new generation of gifted poets and novelists, like Dubouka, Y. Pushcha, U. Chadyka, M. Charot, I. Niomanski, and many others. Dramatics, music, and art developed, and there were in existence four state theaters and an opera.

These achievements in the sphere of education, culture, science, and art were the exclusive result of the sacrificial work of the Byelorussian intelligentsia and the cooperation of the Byelorussian masses. The Kremlin, although it did not openly interfere in the activity of these cultural circles and institutions, very grudgingly observed the progress made in these fields. It tried by limiting material resources and by party and administrative pressure to check this process of cultural and national growth, but it wasn't able to thwart it in any way.

Some indication of Moscow's pressures may be gleaned from the distribution of publications (financed by the Government and controlled by the party) in the B. S. S. R. in 1922-23. Of 14 titles of publications (Jewish and Polish are not included), 3 appeared in the Byelorussian language, 2 in both Russian and Byelorussian, and 9 in Russian. In point of circulation the situation was as follows: *Zvezda*, a Russian daily, had an edition of 13,000 copies, while its counterpart in the Byelorussian language, *Savieckaja Bielarus*, only 3,000 copies. Such ratios with minor variations were maintained through the entire period of the NEP.

Significant progress was made in the economic sphere, especially in agriculture, but less so in industry due to the lack of adequate capital. In agriculture, the People's Commissar, D. Pryshchepau, carried out a policy of creating *khutors* (farms) and increasing the peasant farms at the expense of the confiscated church and landowner properties and the state lands. The effects of this agrarian policy were evident in



the very definite increase of agricultural production, in the number of cattle, and in the improvement of the economic position of the largely agrarian population.

In industry the number of active industrial enterprises in 1924-25 was 297 with 20,897 workers. By 1927-28, it rose to 446 with 36,871 workers. In prewar rubles the value of total production in 1924-25 was 40,202,500; by 1927-28, it was 83,928,200. Besides these industrial enterprises of large and middle sizes, which were the properties of the state, there were also at this time 39,348 small private enterprises of a craft character with 55,000 workers in them.

Taking into account the military destruction of the country and Moscow's discriminatory economic policy toward the B. S. S. R., the leaders of this Republic made important progress in almost all sectors of life. The achievements in the field of education, national culture, and science stand out at the head of these accomplishments, and not without reason gave the Republic a distinct national Byelorussian character. The B. S. S. R. became an attractive center for the Byelorussian population of the neighboring lands and the Byelorussian emigration in the countries of Western Europe. Part of the emigration began to believe in the honesty and sincerity of the Bolshevik policy in the B. S. S. R. and returned to the country to take part, as they said, "in the building of the Byelorussian national home."

From western Byelorussia, as a result of the national and religious discrimination against the Byelorussians by the Polish administration, great numbers began to migrate into the B. S. S. R. In the first instance, this was made up by a large part of the unemployed Byelorussian intelligentsia in Poland and the young students of the Byelorussian secondary schools who were barred in Poland from the higher institutions of learning. What they could not secure heretofore was offered them by the Government of the B. S. S. R.: Work, study, and greater national freedom than under Poland.

Moreover, under the influence of the national achievements in B. S. S. R., a conference was called in Berlin on October 20, 1925, between the representatives of the B. N. R. government-in-exile and those of the Government of the B. S. S. R. As a result of this conference, the majority of the members of the Government of the B. N. R., headed by Prime Minister A. Cvikievich, gave up the rights and legal powers of the B. N. R. to the B. S. S. R., and returned from the emigration to Minsk. In the emigration remained only the President of the Rada of the Byelorussian National Republic, P. Krecheuski, the Vice President of the Rada, V. Zakharaka, and the Minister, T. Hryb.

#### THE END OF NEP AND THE BEGINNING OF SOVIET RUSSIAN GENOCIDE

Having established its power in the U. S. S. R., Moscow in 1929 changed its previous policy of relative toleration toward the Byelorussian people into a policy of severe national persecution and physical annihilation. Moscow's campaign was launched in 1928, and gradually increasing in force became an open terror.

Thus at the end of 1928, Y. Adamovich was removed from the post of chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars and sent into banishment for daring to oppose the unfolding colonial policy of the Kremlin toward B. S. S. R. before a general meeting of the central execu-



tive committee of the party. On August 31, 1929, A. Balicki was removed as Commissar of Education, and on September 14, D. Pryshehepav as Commissar for Agriculture. Then, on October 16, the well-known writer V. Lastouski was relieved as secretary of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences as well as Prof. S. Niekrashevich, the vice president of the academy. After this, Byelorussians were systematically removed from all the more or less responsible official posts and replaced by Russians.

At the same time forced collectivization was introduced into B. S. S. R. This reform caused a sharp reaction from the Byelorussian peasants, who were distinguished by their individualistic point of view and their deep attachment to private property. Then came acts of mass sabotage, destruction of property, burning of crops, killing of cattle, and local anti-Communist outbreaks. A rapid deterioration in the material position of the population ensued, and the threat of famine hung over the country.

All this brought strong repressions from Moscow and an increase in its terror. Mass arrests of the peasants and their deportation to Siberia and Kazakhstan followed. In 1930-31 mass arrests of the Byelorussian intelligentsia were staged. Among the countless intellectuals arrested were the former Prime Minister of the B. N. R., Dr. A. Cvikievich; the writer, V. Lastouski; the geographer, A. Smolich; D. Pryshehepau; and S. Niekrashevich.

Those arrested were charged with belonging to an illegal organization called the Society for the Rebirth of Byelorussia and later named the League for the Liberation of Byelorussia, which was said to be directed against Moscow. They were also accused of contact and cooperation with the Ukrainian Society for the Liberation of Ukraine, the members of which were tried a little earlier in Ukraine. Although the Communists were not able to produce documentary evidence for these accusations, nevertheless, all the arrested were condemned and sent to concentration camps, and almost all perished.

In the fall of 1933 and early 1934, another wave of arrests and terror occurred with the Communists seizing all the former Byelorussian delegates to the Polish Diet who had been at one time at the head of the Byelorussian peasants and Workers Hromada or members of the Byelorussian Diet Club, Zmahannie. All these had come to the B. S. S. R. either voluntarily or through the exchange of prisoners between Poland and the U. S. S. R. Nonetheless, they now were charged with belonging to a "revolutionary, diversionary, and spying organization" under the name of the Byelorussian National Center, which, it was said, cooperated with the Polish general staff and the Ukrainian national organization to free Byelorussia at the end of 1933 or the beginning of 1934 by an armed revolt against the Communists.

Included in this group were former deputies to the Polish Diet, like S. Rak-Mikhalouski, P. Miatla, and P. Valoshyn; members of the Byelorussian Diet Club, Zmahannie, like I. Dvarchanin, Valyniec, Hretski, Krynychuk; and former Byelorussian deputies such as Kachanovich, Baran, and Karuza. Despite the absurdity of the charge, all the accused were punished either by death or exile to a concentration camp on Solovki, where they also perished.

A third wave of mass arrests in Byelorussia took place in 1936-37. In these years, among others, were arrested the poets and novelists,



M. Zarecki, M. Charot, S. Baranavych; the composer, U. Terrauski; the dramatists and artists of the Byelorussian theaters, U. Halubok, Zydovich; and the rector of the university, A. Kuchynski.

This time and in 1938 arrests were made on a larger scale among the Byelorussian Communists, who had succeeded in hiding in the state apparatus of the B. S. S. R. They may have been spared previously by Moscow for tactical reasons of preserving some of the Byelorussian character of the B. S. S. R. or because of "gratitude" for the malicious role which they had often played in the anti-Byelorussian action of Moscow in former years. A. Charviakou, one of the oldest Byelorussian Communists, was arrested and committed suicide. So did Haladzied, the chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars in 1936. Uborevich, the commander of the Byelorussian military district, was arrested and shot along with Tukachevski. Arrested, too, were Stakun, the successor of Charviakou, and the secretary of the central committee of the party, Sharangovich. Those who did not commit suicide were liquidated during the long interrogations in prison or in the concentration camps of the U. S. S. R.

In the great majority of cases, despite the constitutional guaranties of rights on fair trial, etc., the process was without trial and possibility of defense by the accused. In a few cases, for the sake of propaganda or to justify before the people the terror, the economic chaos, and other failures of the Soviet system, there were arranged show trials in which the accused with self-scourging confessions admitted their "crimes" and demanded stern punishment for themselves.

As an example, the show trial of Sharangovich, who at the 16th Congress of the Communist Party in B. S. S. R. in June 1937 played the role of accuser of those previously arrested, is outstanding. As reported from Moscow:

He asserts that in Byelorussia there had been a national organization since 1932 to which almost all the leading Byelorussian politicians belonged. The object of this Byelorussian group was the national independence of their country, i. e., tearing Byelorussia away from the Soviet Union. \* \* \* The Byelorussian group had worked from the beginning in the closest connection with the Polish general staff, and the directives of the latter for sabotage, the undermining of the economic and military power of the country, espionage, etc., were most carefully carried out. The terrible confusion in the economy, the fall in the number of cattle, the spread of diseases, etc., were all the result of this sabotage. [Voelkischer Beobachter, March 5, 1938, quoted from Weissruthenien, p. 179.]

Whoever knows even a trifle of the situation in the B. S. S. R. at that time will not doubt the fantastic character of this self-accusation.

There are no accurate quantitative data as to the physical annihilation of the Byelorussian population at the time, and it is very doubtful whether such will ever be secured or discovered. In any case the losses probably amounted to millions. According to the estimates of Byelorussian national circles made during World War II, the process of collectivization in Byelorussia in the years 1929-31 itself cost the Byelorussian nation more than one and a half million in lives. The total amount during the entire rule of the Communists in Byelorussia is estimated at about four and a half million. If we take into account the indirect losses resulting from the reduction of natural increase due to premature deaths under technical famine, the increased mortality of these years and the separation of families by imprisonment, the losses are far greater.



Witness Abramtschik in testimony before the committee made these estimates on loss of population:

All these mass as well as individual arrests and shooting led to the conclusion that during the 35 years of Bolshevik domination about 15 million people were destroyed, about 3 million were either shot or sent to Siberia. Economic misery reduced considerably the span of life and the birthrate. As a result there were minus 12 million people that would normally have been, considering the national growth of population. In 1918 in the ethnographic territory of Byelorussia there lived 18 million people. Today, according to the Bolshevik statistics, there are only 16 million. That is 2 million less than there were in 1918. According to the national growth of the Byelorussian population, established as 19 per thousand, it should now be 30 million. Today there are about 14½ million less. This shows the organized destruction which is directed toward the destruction of the Byelorussian population.

Communism did not limit itself merely to the physical annihilation of the Byelorussian intelligentsia and part of the peasantry, the two basic strata of the Byelorussian nation. The Kremlin commenced to liquidate the cultural achievements of the Byelorussian people as well.

Thus they destroyed the Cross of St. Euphrosinya of Polotsk, an historical monument dating from 1161; the Rohvaladau Stone, near the village of Dziatlava, another historical monument of 1171; and the Barysa Stone in the vicinity of the village Vysoki Haradziec. They blew up the Sokaravy Cross, an historical monument of 1569 and demolished dozens of churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, and synagogues invaluable for their architecture, sculpture, and painting. These and many other acts of vandalism were executed to remove the traces of Byelorussia's historical past and its past cultural achievements in order to facilitate the spread of the Communist theory on the close connection between the Byelorussian people and the Russians and the beginning of Byelorussian history in the Communist era.

The Communists removed from circulation and destroyed all patriotic Byelorussian works and publications. According to the "Joint Control List of Publications of the Byelorussian State Publishing House," a secret document printed in 1935 for party use only in an edition of 500 copies, in 1935 alone there were destroyed 1,778 listed names of books and journals in a general total of 12 million copies. Among the items destroyed were Byelorussian Fables, Proverbs and Jokes by A. Sierzputowski, Collection of the Works of Byelorussian Folk Literature, Four Centuries of Byelorussian Printing, Byelorussian Archives—a periodical of the works of the Byelorussian Academic Conferences, etc.

Along with this process of cultural genocide, the Kremlin increased the Russification of B. S. S. R. Byelorussia was flooded with Russian literature both of party propaganda and classical character. The cult of Russian national heroes, not excluding even some czars who had specially worked to create and build the Russian Empire, was introduced; and to facilitate and hasten the policy of Russification, in an official decree of August 28, 1933, they reformed the Byelorussian orthography and grammar. By this reform the basic differences between the Byelorussian and Russian languages were removed. The Byelorussian language after this reform lost its specific linguistic features, and became a caricature of a mixture of Russian and Byelorussian.



An intensive Russification of the schools was pursued. The language of instruction in the higher schools was made almost exclusively Russian, and the number of Russian secondary schools was greatly increased. In Minsk before World War II there were only five Byelorussian secondary schools. Also, they banned the observance of many Byelorussian national holidays, customs, and usages.

The sweep of Soviet Russian genocide of course engulfed the religious institutions in Byelorussia with harsh intensity. The situation of religion in Byelorussia, as a body of faith, is in general the same as that in the rest of the U. S. S. R. But taking into account the national element in the religious life of Byelorussia, we can be sure that its position in the B. S. S. R. is comparatively worse than in the R. S. F. S. R.

The early cause of this was the effort of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church to secure independence from Moscow at a council (sobor) of clergy and lay people which was held on July 23, 1923, in Minsk. This council proclaimed the independence of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church, but it was not recognized by Moscow. Bishop Melchisedek, chosen by the council as metropolitan, was called to Moscow, arrested and compelled in prison to lay down his title as metropolitan. Shortly afterward he died under mysterious circumstances. At the same time the other more active advocates of the ecclesiastical independence of Byelorussia from Moscow were arrested.

Rev. Nikolaj Lapitzki testified before the committee as follows:

With the strengthening of Soviet regime, this movement was repressed. Soon Metropolitan Melchisedek was called to Moscow (September 1925) and arrested. Bishop Johan of Mazyr died in a concentration camp in 1927. Bishop Filaret or Bobruisk died in prison in 1939, also in prison died Nikolaus, Bishop Sluzk (1931). Many other followers were sent to Siberia's slave camps or shot. By 1937 all the clergy of Byelorussia was liquidated, the churches locked or destroyed, services completely stopped. While speaking about freedom of religion in their constitutions, Communists closed all churches (about 2,000) at the same time in the whole Byelorussia. All the bishops and clergy were arrested, starved to death, tortured, or lost in slave camps of Siberia. I know only two priests from Minsk diocese, Very Rev. Johan Brujakin and Rev. Wasiliy Werzbalowicz, who lived through the slave camps and after Bolsheviki were drawn out of Byelorussia (1941) came to Minsk to the metropolitan's office.

The subsequent development of Soviet policy toward the religious life of the B. S. S. R. saw hundreds of churches, Orthodox and Catholic, and synagogues barbarously ruined. The Uspensky Cathedral built in the Baroque style in Vitebsk in 1743 was blown up with dynamite. Also blown up were the Church of the Resurrection in Vitebsk, the Cathedral of Peter and Paul in Minsk, built in Baroque style in 1772, the Catholic Church and the Trinity Monastery of the 14th century in Slutsk, the synagogue in Mogilev of the 16th century, and numerous others. According to the figures of Bishop Afanasy in his work, Materials for the History of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church, published in 1948, of the 2,445 churches and 23 monasteries existing before World War I, there was in 1941 not a single one truly serving the religious needs of the population of the B. S. S. R.

Rev. Nikolaj Lapitzki testified further:

This wave of sudden arrests, imprisonments, and ruthless extermination of Greek-Orthodox clergymen, destruction of churches, cemeteries, and disgrace of ikons was an indication of the Soviet anti-religious campaign in western Byelorussia.



Dr. Nicholas Scors testified before the committee as follows:

I have here some pictures taken in 1937 and 1938 during the Soviet Russian occupation in Byelorussia, and from these pictures we can see that the churches, which were all national shrines of the Byelorussian people, were either destroyed or converted into warehouses, storage places, and for other purposes.

May I stress one point in connection with these pictures? I would like to say we know the attitude of Soviet Russia toward religion. Somebody might wonder just why they destroy the churches. The reason is that Communist theory and Communist ideology cannot coexist together with Christian philosophy and religion. But I wanted to stress here that they didn't destroy only the churches as churches. They destroyed the church as a national symbol, along with other things which represented the national spirit and cultural background of the nation. Here are the ruins of the castle of the Queen Bona in Smolany, district of Vitebsk. The castle was built in the 15th century. In 1928 the Bolsheviki partially destroyed it for the purpose of constructing a dormitory. In 1935 there was further destruction for the purpose of building a public bathhouse.

We know from Soviet Russian propaganda that the men in the Kremlin are saying that Soviet Russia is the leading nation or leading state within the U. S. S. R. from the cultural standpoint. It is interesting to note here that they were destroying the Byelorussian culture and destroying everything that was in connection with that culture. And we have to remember that Soviet Russian propaganda especially in India claims a high culture. It is not the truth at all because they are liquidating real culture and replacing it with the barbaric way of life.

The terror in the B. S. S. R. steadily increased until the beginning of 1939 when it was somewhat relaxed owing to the growing tension of the international situation, only to be renewed after World War II. In the practical sense Byelorussia had become nothing more than one of the provinces of the Russian Empire with a changed name, another social structure, and new administrative division.

#### THE REACTION OF BYELORUSSIA TO MOSCOW

In a series of armed revolts in 1920-29, in constant passive resistance, and in acts of sabotage, the awakened Byelorussian nation displayed its reaction to Moscow. The most important military movement against the Communists was the revolt in Slutsk in November 1920. The strength of the rebels was over 10,000, organized in 2 regiments (the Grozauski under the command of Captain Siemian-yuk and the Sluck regiment under Colonel Havrilovich) forming the First Slutsk Division with Antsypovich at its head. The political platform of the revolt was expressed in a resolution of the Congress of Sluchchyna on November 14, 1920, in which we read among other clauses:

The Congress of Sluchchyna, meeting with 107 members, greets the Supreme Rada of the Byelorussian National Republic and pledges that it will give all its strength to the building of the Fatherland; it categorically protests the occupation of our country by the alien and self-appointed Communist authorities. Long live the free, independent National Byelorussian Republic in its ethnographical boundaries.

After initial victorious actions against the Red army, the insurgents fell before its overwhelming force and on December 28, 1920, crossed the Polish border.

In 1924 an official Communist source indicated the existence of 40 Byelorussian bands. This, in Soviet terminology, meant Byelorussian partisan units. According to the testimony of the local population, the last partisan unit dissolved itself near Dukora Rudziensk in 1929. In 1934 another revolt started in Velizh but it was



quickly liquidated. On January 27, 1934, 316 partisans of the unit "Byelaya Svitka" (White Coat) were killed in this city by the Communists.

Numerous underground Byelorussian organizations developed. The League of Byelorussian Youth was founded in 1922. A patriotic organization was led by Yury Listopad in Slutsk in 1924-26 and published the periodical *Nashe Slovo* (Our Word). It was liquidated at a great trial in Minsk on March 5, 1926. The Organization of Altruists was abolished in 1930 in Homel. Even the Communist Party, founded on a selective system, did not succeed in protecting itself against national Byelorussian infiltration. In his report to the 16th Congress of the Communist Party in B. S. S. R., held June 10-19, 1937, F. Sharangovich, the first secretary of the party, reported that 50 percent of the Communist organizations in the B. S. S. R. were permeated and run by Byelorussian national democrats. According to this report, in Vitebsk 188 out of 191 party organizations and in Homel 109 out of 143 were "polluted by Byelorussian national democratic banditism" (Weissruthenien, p. 179).

#### THE BYELORUSSIAN MOVEMENT OUTSIDE THE B. S. S. R.

By reason of the Treaty of Riga, about one-third of the Byelorussian territory, with an area of more than 100,000 square kilometers and a Byelorussian population of about 3½ million, was attached to Poland. According to the supplemental protocol to paragraph 93 of the Treaty of Versailles, signed by Poland and the Entente Powers on June 28, 1919, the Byelorussians in Poland were assured protection of their life, freedom, property, and religious convictions, instruction in their native tongue, use of their language in the courts, and the organization of their social, charitable, and educational institutions. In paragraph IX of the same supplementary protocol, it was said that Poland was to guarantee for the institutions of non-Polish groups (schools, cultural organizations, charitable societies, etc.) the right to material help from the resources of the state budget. The treaty declared that "all the rights, all the orders and official acts in Poland which will be in opposition to these enunciated principles will not be valid." The duty of carrying out these resolutions was entrusted to the League of Nations.

In paragraph 7 of the Riga Treaty, Poland guaranteed to persons of the Byelorussian and other nationalities the right to a free development of their language, culture, etc., and in the Polish Constitution of March 20, 1920, all the rights of the national minorities provided by the Versailles and Riga Treaties were repeated and guaranteed. This was the position of the Byelorussians under international law and internal Polish law.

#### THE "LIBERATION" OF WESTERN BYELORUSSIA BY MOSCOW

The outbreak of World War II was accepted by the Byelorussian people, as might be expected, with an understandable sigh of relief and a certain satisfaction. "We have only our lives to lose and they are worth nothing now, and we may gain something," was the expression of both the peasants and the representatives of the Byelorussian



intelligentsia. However, instead of an improvement, the war brought to western Byelorussia the Red army and the Soviet system.

In line with its perfidious policy, the Kremlin wanted the union of western Byelorussia with the U. S. S. R. to appear voluntary. Elections were ordered for a national assembly to "decide" the state adherence of western Byelorussia. It is needless to speak of the fictional character of these "elections." Candidates for the assembly were named by the agents of the NKVD as Communists by the thousands were sent in from the U. S. S. R., and the role of the population was limited to the casting of ballots under police pressure. About the degree of infiltration of western Byelorussia by members of the Communist Party, chiefly Russians from the U. S. S. R., we can learn from the already mentioned book of T. Gorbunov, who writes:

Along with the first units of the Red army the Bolshevik Party sent to western Byelorussia its best people to help their blood brothers in creating Soviet conditions of life. Many Communists and Comsomols came from Minsk, Homel, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Polotsk, Borisov, and many other cities and villages.

As a result of this help, on October 22, 1939, 2,672,000 or 96.7 percent, took part in the voting for the "national" candidates and 90.6 percent voted for them. Nine hundred and twenty-nine deputies were elected, and on October 28, 1939, they "unanimously" decided on the incorporation of western Byelorussia into the U. S. S. R.

On February 24, 1940, 99 percent voted in the first elections, and 98.11 percent of this sent 22 elected deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the U. S. S. R. and over 200 to the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. The process of incorporation in its juridical aspect was thus settled. There was left the practical part which was not long in appearing. In the beginning of 1940 the railroad lines were crowded with freight trains going to the east with thousands of deported men, women, and children. More than a half million persons traveled during this "incorporation" to Siberia and the hot wastes of Kazakhstan. Then at a quick tempo, the sovietization, Russification, and the accompanying impoverishment of the land went on. Western Byelorussia became a region of terror. The situation grew progressively worse until the day of the outbreak of the German-Soviet War on June 21, 1941.

#### THE OCCUPATION OF BYELORUSSIA BY NAZI GERMANY, 1941-44

In an unexpected attack on June 21, 1941, Nazi Germany commenced war against the U. S. S. R. The Red army, concentrated on the territory of Byelorussia, began a panic-stricken retreat. In great masses they were surrounded by the rapidly advancing German military units. In the very beginning of the war the Germans captured millions of Red army soldiers. It was evident that the Soviet soldiers did not wish to fight for the U. S. S. R. and looked upon the war situation as possibly offering the opportunity to throw off the Communist oppressors.

The Soviet Administration, the Communist Party leaders, the NKVD, and the militia fled to the east long before the appearance of the Germans and left the civilian population to their fate. However, in only a few places did the NKVD abandon the prisoners in the local prisons. In some cases they drove the prisoners on foot to the east



and when pressed by the Germans, the NKVD guards killed them. In many cases the NKVD killed all the prisoners in the prisons, as in Berezvech. The Communists did not wish to leave behind any living testimonies to their crimes in Byelorussia.

On the third day of the war the first German reconnaissance detachments entered Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia, and parachutists landed in the environs. In the beginning of July 1941, the larger part of Byelorussia was occupied by the German Armies which were east of Roslavl and approaching Leningrad. In September 1941, the operations around Moscow began and the German command was confident of a decisive victory over the U. S. S. R.

Three days before the beginning of military operations in Byelorussia, the Germans dropped parachute groups of Byelorussian diversionists for anti-Soviet work. The first German units distributed notices of the German military command to the Byelorussian people, announcing the war as one of liberation from Communist imperialism. Byelorussia was declared the living space of the Byelorussian people. This was the propaganda side of Nazi policy.

In reality, however, the bases of the Nazi policy for eastern Europe had been set forth by Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf*. Hitler considered all of eastern Europe the living space of the German people; the native populaces were to become colonial peoples under, now, Berlin.

To understand in part this move, one must recall that the Byelorussian emigration in Germany increased in size after the destruction of Poland in 1939. It formed the Byelorussian National Centre and tried to influence the German Government to take account of the aspirations of the Byelorussian people and to create an independent Byelorussian state. The Centre sent to Chancellor Hitler a long memorandum in which it expressed the hope that the Third Reich would not repeat the mistakes of the Germany of the Kaiser and of Brest. It was assured by representatives of the German Government that the ideas contained in this memorandum would be taken into consideration. Believing in the assurances of the German Government and hoping for a just resolution of the Byelorussian problem, Byelorussian activists cooperated with Germany in the struggle against the U. S. S. R. for the liberation of Byelorussia.

Nevertheless, counting on a modification of the Hitlerian policy, the Byelorussians entered the struggle to create their own forces in the country. So with the German military units the Byelorussian leaders began to take over the organization of the administrative centers. Everywhere there was a Byelorussian administration, confirmed by the German command. Later to resist the diversions of Communist partisans, Byelorussian military units were organized, and to protect the railroads special railroad military units were formed.

#### GERMAN ADMINISTRATION IN BYELORUSSIA

Since the eastern part of Byelorussia was constantly in the sphere of the military operations of the German armies which were thrown back by the Communists in the winter of 1941-42, the territory assigned to the General Commissariat of Byelorussia was divided into two parts, the military to the east and the civil to the west. The civil



administration took in only the western part of Byelorussia, and here the essence of the future planned by the Germans for Byelorussia became evident.

In the beginning of September 1941, the organs of the German civil administration began to function. The entire personnel of the General Commissariat were Germans familiar with Byelorussian conditions. There was established in the General Commissariat a Byelorussian bureau (Nebenbüro), consisting of educational, scientific and cultural, engineering and statistical sections. This was formed from part of the organization of the Byelorussian civil administration set up in the early period of military occupation. The General Commissariat published a newspaper (Amtsblatt) which printed official orders and laws in German and Byelorussian.

The district commissariats and their departments were also manned by German officials. The burgomeisters of the cities and the chiefs of the counties with the entire regional administration and the heads of the communities with their administration were made up of people from the local population. The security services were in the hands of the German organs SD, SS, and the gendarmerie. In the counties a Byelorussian police was organized, attached to the local German gendarme detachment. Byelorussian attempts to organize a centralized administration for the Byelorussian police were banned by the German authorities.

In the industrial cities professional labor organizations were formed under the guidance of the German chiefs of the Arbeitsfront. For commercial affairs a German Central Trading Society Ost (ZHO) was created, with a center in Minsk and branches in the districts. Special attention was paid to the youth. A centralized Union of Byelorussian Youth was set up with a center in Minsk. This organization was forbidden to unite with other Byelorussian organizations and institutions and obeyed the orders of the German leadership to which it was attached.

In the General Commissariat was a section of propagandists. The Germans recruited propagandists from the Byelorussian war prisoners in the camps in Germany, but these were forbidden to have relations with the Byelorussian organizations and institutions and were strictly placed under the orders of the German chiefs. Independent political activity was forbidden, and the role of Byelorussians was reduced to that of technical aides for the German authority.

#### BYELORUSSIAN NATIONAL ACTIVITY

The ruinous policy of Moscow toward everything nationally Byelorussian in the eastern area and the Polish suppression of everything Byelorussian in the western part were the basic reasons for the weakness of the Byelorussian national movement at the start of World War II. However, immediately after the flight of the Soviet administration, Byelorussians everywhere spontaneously began to organize their own administration and police as the first steps toward normal community life.

In Western Byelorrussia the Poles appeared as rivals. They came mostly from neighboring Poland, and strove to organize a Polish administration in an attempt to secure Western Byelurussia for



Poland. A conflict developed, and the Nazis exploited it for their own ends. They liquidated Byelorussian and Polish activists in the country for they saw in both, rivals to their own control.

Inhabiting the cities and towns of the formerly tolerant Byelorussia were people of various nationalities and faiths: Byelorussians, Poles, Jews, Russians, Tatars, etc. So after the occupation of the country the Nazi Government took measures to isolate the Jews in separate quarters, ghettos, and barred their free departure from them. The civilian population was forbidden contact with the Jews under pain of severe punishment. In the autumn of 1941 began the inhuman criminal extermination of the Jews. Somewhat later there arrived in Minsk transports of Jews from Western Europe. These were placed in the ghettos and later killed.

At the end of the summer in 1941, on the initiative of Dr. Antonovich, there was organized in Minsk a Byelorussian Red Cross to help the local population. But the idea of a Red Cross as an institution of an international character connected with the International Red Cross did not suit Nazi plans for the full control of Byelorussia. So on the arrival of the German civil administration, the Byelorussian Red Cross was liquidated, but permission was granted to organize a Byelorussian National Relief (BNS). With Dr. I. Ermachenko at the head, the BNS was a Byelorussian organization of a centralized type covering the entire territory of the country. Its top administration was in Minsk, under the protection of the General Commissariat of Byelorussia.

In addition, the people began to organize their religious life. In the eastern part of Byelorussia, religious life had been completely liquidated by the Communists, but in the western part they had not the time, because of their brief control to destroy it completely. The believers in Eastern Byelorussia at once began to repair the churches and renew the services, baptisms, and the entire religious life. Priests came from the west and church life was organized throughout the entire country. The German civil administration allowed the organization of a Byelorussian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and acknowledged as its head Metropolitan Panteleymon who lived in Western Byelorussia and led the Orthodox Church there. He took the title of Archbishop of Minsk and Metropolitan of all Byelorussia.

For final decisions as to the organization of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church on autocephalous principles, according to the canons of the Orthodox Churches, there was held, in 1942 in Minsk, an All-Byelorussian Orthodox Council attended by bishops, priests, and laymen. This passed a resolution for the formation of the Byelorussian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, approved the statutes for it, and voted to send a letter to all autocephalous churches, informing them of the organization of the independent Byelorussian Orthodox Church and requesting that it be accepted into the communion of prayers as an equal. The text was taken to the Patriarchate of Constantinople as the Mother of the Byelorussian Church with the request to issue a thomos for its independent existence.

The task of popular education could not be undertaken in 1941-42 because of the severe war destruction. But school divisions were organized in every administration beginning with the General Commissariat and ending with the county school inspectors. Only elemen-



tary schools functioned. By the autumn of 1942, a delegation of the BNS and parents and teachers in Minsk turned to the General Commissariat with a request to permit the opening of secondary schools. The German representative declared that Byelorussia was an agrarian country. In the plans for German policy the Byelorussians would be farmers and cattle raisers and so elementary schools were sufficient. Permission was granted only to open educational seminaries for the training of teachers.

But the defeats of the German armies and the growth of the anti-German partisan movement in Byelorussia influenced a change of German policy in all fields, including education. Permission was soon given to open some gymnasiums and middle professional schools in Minsk and the district cities. In Mahilev a medical institute was opened and later moved to Novaya Vialyka.

Cultural life developed chiefly in the cities. In Minsk the city theater with its operatic and dramatic sections reached a high artistic level. The composer, N. Shchaglou, wrote a number of excellent operas based on Byelorussian folk melodies; for the librettos he used motifs from the heroic historical past of Byelorussia or rich Byelorussian folklore. The composers Turankov, Samokhin, and Ivanou were active in the use of Byelorussian folklore and created a national wealth of Byelorussian music. There were theaters opened in Smolensk, Vitebsk, and elsewhere.

The press was controlled by the German administration and, consequently, the Byelorussians could develop initiative only in very limited ways. During this period there appeared the newspapers Belorusskaya Gazeta and Golos Veski (The Voice of the Village) in Minsk; the Baranovickaya Gazeta in Baranovich; the Novaya Daroga (New Road) by the Byelorussian Committee in Byelastok; and Ranitsa (Morning) issued by the Byelorussian Relief Committee in Berlin.

Due to the oversight of the German authorities, the BNS in Minsk managed to publish the historical work of I. Stankevich, Byelorussia, Krivia in the Past, in 1942. Later, under very critical German censorship, there appeared the historical work of J. Naydiuk, Byelorussia Yesterday and Today, and a desk book calendar. In Slutsk the local section of the BNS issued a collection of poems written by modern Byelorussian poets of the Slutsk district, Singers of Sluchchina.

A number of poets, writers, and scholars worked creatively under the hard conditions of the war. They prepared textbooks for the schools, but these could not be printed.

Vasil Misiul testified before the committee regarding teaching in the schools:

Mr. MISIUL. In 1939 I was mobilized by the Soviet authorities to perform the functions of a teacher.

Mr. McTIGUE. After you were mobilized by the Communists in 1939 to teach in the schools, can you tell us something about the system of education under Communist rule?

Mr. MISIUL. The Bolshevik system of teaching differed very little from the former Czarist Russian system. On paper the Bolsheviks introduced a system of teaching in the Byelorussian language, but in reality they demanded that everybody should speak Russian.

Mr. McTIGUE. Did they tell you that you had to teach school?

Mr. MISIUL. Yes.



Mr. McTIGUE. Did they give you certain instructions in how you should teach the children?

Mr. MISIUL. There were special inspectors who watched that the instructions were carried out strictly.

Mr. McTIGUE. Were these instructors stationed in the classrooms?

Mr. MISIUL. The inspectors would call meetings of teachers from time to time and would deliver pep talks to these teachers on how to apply the Soviet system of education.

Mr. McTIGUE. And were you each day required to follow that line in teaching the children?

Mr. MISIUL. Whenever there was a day that I felt fairly secure that there would be no official inspectors coming into my classes, I would teach the way I thought fit. However, if there was any suspicion that there might be an inspection that day or any day nearby, then naturally all of us had to teach strictly according to instructions.

Mr. McTIGUE. And the instructions were the Communist line, is that right?

Mr. MISIUL. Yes, the instruction was strict Communist line.

Mr. McTIGUE. Was the educational system in Byelorussia at that time in poor condition?

Mr. MISIUL. Those schools which had been in existence in that part of Byelorussia which had been under Polish rule were in good shape, but the Bolsheviks opened a great number of new schools, and they were very inferior compared to those which had existed before.

Mr. McTIGUE. Did you at any time tell the Communists that the attendance was low at school, that the buildings were in bad shape, and so forth and so on?

Mr. MISIUL. It was the Soviet authorities that complained to us teachers about the poor attendance of children in schools and demanded of us that the attendance be higher. We were helpless. That's where I got in trouble with them, over the matter of attendance.

At one of such school meetings these political authorities that teachers do more work and accused the teachers, claiming it was their fault that the attendance had fallen off and that the teaching was not on the proper level. I could not stand these accusations, so I stood up and I voiced my criticism of the entire management of the school system. For this reason I was fired from my job.

Of the dramas, *The Lost Life* by Todar Lebyada made an especially strong impression upon the audience. The whole overcrowded theater of Minsk wept loudly at its performance, as it portrayed only a small part of the cruel Moscow policy in Byelorussia.

In the field of agriculture, the peasants decided their lot immediately upon the withdrawal of the Communist forces. In the autumn of 1941, with great enthusiasm, they abolished the hated kolkhozes, and divided the land and property for private use. This happened in the vast majority of the kolkhozes in both Eastern and Western Byelorussia. However, the German authorities opposed this. They preferred the kolkhoz form of domination for the extreme organized exploitation of the peasants and agriculture. But later, in view of the growth of the partisan movement, they were compelled to yield, and themselves organized for propaganda purposes divisions of the land for the peasants.

In the area of manufacturing industry, socialized plants under the Communists were fully taken over by the Germans. They afforded no possibilities for the Byelorussians to develop private industry.

#### THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT

In World War II various political currents existed in Byelorussia: German, Byelorussian, Polish, and Russian. The individual strength of these was essentially very different, but they all in various forms made clear their intentions toward Byelorussia.



In the early autumn of 1942, Soviet planes transported operatives in the German rear in Eastern Byelorussia, which set up a military and political leadership for the organization of a partisan movement. The activity of the Communist partisans was directed against both the Germans and the Byelorussians. They destroyed the railroad lines, burned establishments and supplies, killed Germans and Byelorussian workers. Of the outstanding Byelorussians murdered were F. Alyakhnovich, a dramatist and publicist; Prof. V. Ivanousky, burgomeister of Minsk; F. Akinchits, organizer of propagandists; V. Kazlousky, a publicist on the *Belarusskaya Gazeta*. Many priests, teachers, and workers of the B. N. S. were killed. To win the sympathy of the population to the Soviet side, the partisans spread reports of great changes in the U. S. S. R., the freedom of religion, etc.

In view of the German colonial policy in Byelorussia, which offered no hope for the nation's independence, Byelorussian national activists went into the wild places to organize their own partisan struggle against the Germans and the other invaders of Byelorussia. However, without any material support in the struggle against its several foes, the Byelorussian national partisan movement could not develop adequately. Instead, to a large extent, the vast majority of the people attempted to utilize available legal means for strengthening the Byelorussian national movement.

#### THE TOTTERING GERMAN COLONIAL POLICY IN BYELORUSSIA

On June 21, 1942, the General Commissariat in Byelorussia announced the creation of an institution known as the Men of Confidence. I. Ermachenko was invited to be a Man of Confidence. At the same time the Byelorussian National Relief received some political prerogatives. It was instructed to organize a Byelorussian self-defense outfit, armed units for the fight against the partisans. Then an appeal was published to the Byelorussian population, signed by such prominent Byelorussian leaders as I. Ermachenko, Archbishop Filafey, Fr. V. Hadleusky, Burg. V. Ivanousky, V. Kazlousky, and Ju. Sakovich. This appeal described the antinational policy of the Communists, and called upon the people to fight the partisans.

The BNS soon organized its representatives in general meetings in Minsk for the purpose of planning its activity. Given the new prerogatives, the BNS assumed a growing political significance. In 1943, it sharply criticized the German policy in Byelorussia, the burning of villages and the destruction of the innocent population, and demanded the creation of a Byelorussian armed force under Byelorussian command. It advanced the slogan: The Byelorussians themselves must destroy the Russian Communist invasion of Byelorussia.

Soon after this, I. Ermachenko was removed from Byelorussia by the insular German authorities. New Men of Confidence were appointed to the General Commissariat, with V. Ivanousky at the head. A Byelorussian Scientific Society was founded, and J. Sobolevsky was appointed the chief of the BNS which by now had lost its political character.

By this time the German armies were retreating west before the advancing Communists. Ukraine was occupied by the Soviet forces,



and the blow against Byelorussia was anticipated. Byelorussian demands now increased with force. The German authorities finally took cognizance of these conditions and made certain concessions. On December 21, 1943, they allowed the Byelorussians to create a Byelorussian Central Rada (council) with R. Astrousky at its head.

Late as it was, on March 6, 1944, the president of the Byelorussian Central Rada declared a mobilization for the Byelorussian National Defense, and about 36,000 soldiers were organized into battalions. An officers' school of the Defense was opened in Minsk.

To regulate its national representation of Byelorussia, the Rada called on June 27, 1944, the Second All-Byelorussian Congress in Minsk. In it 1,039 delegates from all parts of the country participated, and represented all classes of the people. The congress with patriotic fervor reaffirmed the act proclaiming the state independence of the Byelorussian National Republic on March 25, 1918, annulled all international treaties for the division and annexation of Byelorussia, and reestablished a national representation of Byelorussia and the Byelorussian people in the form of the Byelorussian Central Rada (council).

The basic resolution of the congress was as follows: (1) To acknowledge as right and to reaffirm the historic resolution of the Council of the Byelorussian National Republic, which had the authorization from the First All-Byelorussian Congress of 1917 and which on its assembly on March 25, 1918, with the solemn Third Constitutional Act determined, to finally break Byelorussia away from Communist Russia and the Russian state in any form; (2) to declare that the Byelorussian people have never accepted, do not accept now, and never will accept as a form of its own Byelorussian state the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic forced upon them by the Moscow imperialists; (3) to inform all governments and nations of the entire world that the voice of Moscow and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Byelorussian affairs does not have any legal validity and all so-called Byelorussian governments, created by Moscow, do not have any legal competencies, because they are not acknowledged by the Byelorussian people. Therefore, all agreements or political decisions of the governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, of formerly existing Poland, and of the present so-called government of Poland in exile, concerning the territory of Byelorussia and the Byelorussian people, which have been prepared or which will be made in the future, the Second All-Byelorussian Congress proclaims as deprived of legal force, as well as other various possible efforts for the partition of Byelorussia by other states and nations; and (4) the Byelorussian Central Rada, with its President Radaslau Astrousky at its head, is hereby acknowledged today as the only legal representative of the Byelorussian people and their country.

The colossal blunder of Germany in its treatment of the enslaved non-Russian nations in the U. S. S. R. was by now clearly evident. The Byelorussian Central Rada was soon compelled to withdraw from the country before the violent assault of the Soviet armies. It went to Germany and continued the struggle for the liberation of Byelorussia from the occupation of Soviet Russia, in accordance with the decision of the Second All-Byelorussian Congress. Part of the Byelorussian National Defense was sent to the front against the Soviet armies and was then reorganized as the First Byelorussian



Division. Groups were parachuted into Byelorussia with Major Vitushka at their head for action in the rear of the enemy. At the same time the Rada provided protection for the Byelorussian refugees and those deported for work in Germany.

#### BYELORUSSIA UNDER THE NEW RUSSIAN COMMUNIST OCCUPATION

After the occupation of Byelorussia in July 1944, Soviet Russia reestablished the B. S. S. R. with all its former details. The one thing new was the admission of the B. S. S. R. in the organization of the United Nations as an independent state and a founding member.

Changes in the constitutions of the B. S. S. R. and the U. S. S. R. empowered the B. S. S. R. to have its own Republican military formations, and also to enter into direct relations with foreign states and to conclude agreements and exchange diplomatic representatives. In 1952 the banner for the B. S. S. R. was altered, keeping the red color and the emblems of the sickle and hammer in common with the U. S. S. R. However, the aim of these changes has been to mislead international political bodies as well as general public opinion. In this way Soviet Russia has hoped to use with greater success the B. S. S. R. in the United Nations and in their international policy. In reality everything in the B. S. S. R. remained fundamentally without change. There is, as was before, a complete enslavement and subjugation of Byelorussia by imperial Moscow.

From the very beginning of the occupation the Communists began a bloody reprisal on the Byelorussian people. Everything which had a national character was wiped from the face of the Byelorussian land as a manifestation of "Byelorussian bourgeois nationalism." In the cities and towns they undertook mass deportations of Byelorussian national and cultural leaders. In Smolensk, Minsk, Vitebsk, Vialyka, and other cities there were public hangings of the artists of the Byelorussian theaters, teachers, officials of institutions, priests, workers in the relief, etc. Mass arrests, shootings, and deportations to concentration camps were carried on of peasants who had left the kolkhoz for individual agriculture.

The Communists zealously sought out and are still seeking both in Byelorussia and abroad Byelorussian activists in order to destroy them. They murdered Dush-Dushevsky in Kovno, a member of the B. N. R., V. Rusak in Prague, a leader in the Slutsk uprising, the soloist, Zabeyda-Sumitsky, a tenor of the Milan opera, Dr. E. Heniush, an official of the Byelorussian Relief agency, the poetess, L. Heniush, disappeared without a trace from Prague; and in Germany the scholar Baykov and the researcher Bakach were shot; Docent P. Zharsky was taken from Prague to Minsk and hanged there; and Capt. K. Yakutsevich from Austria to Navahrada to meet the same fate.

The Communists were especially aided by the compulsory repatriation of Byelorussians from Western Europe to the U. S. S. R. after the ending of World War II. This led to the shooting of many thousands of them and death in the concentration camps of hundreds of thousands of others. L. Tsanova, the chief of the MVD in the B. S. S. R. tells in his book, *The All National Partisan War*, published in Minsk in 1951, of the killing by the Communists of the Byelorussian nationalists and promises to destroy those who are still alive.



In 1944 the male population of Byelorussia was taken into the Soviet Army and without training sent to the front, where they perished in masses. In the B. S. S. R. the slave kolkhoz system was quickly reintroduced, and this time all of rural Byelorussia was collectivized. The independent Byelorussian Church was destroyed, and in its place was set up the Russian Church with its center in Moscow. The Russian Archbishop Pitirim was then sent to Byelorussia to carry out the will of the Moscow government.

The Russification of Byelorussia is being pushed today by all available means. As T. Gorbunov, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, observes in an article, "On the Further Flowering of the Socialist Culture of Soviet Byelorussia":

\* \* \* in the last period in Byelorussia the number of schools where instruction is carried on in the Russian language has greatly increased, the number of circles for studying the Russian language has grown. In the cities, working settlements, and regional centers, along with the Byelorussian middle and elementary schools, Russian schools have been opened and are functioning on the initiative of the population. [Communist, No. 12, August 1954.]

The same aim of liquidating the Byelorussian nation underlies the measures to make use of the virgin lands in Kazakhstan, begun by Moscow in the spring of 1954. Young people from Byelorussia, men and women under the guise of volunteers, are being compelled to leave their families for distant Kazakhstan to build a grain base for the Moscow empire. By this measure Moscow wishes to deprive Byelorussia of the healthy and energetic part of its people and to denationalize it in a foreign land.

Mikola Abramtschik testified before the committee as follows:

Mr. FEIGHAN. What do you think was the main reason for this genocide of the nation?

Mr. ABRAMTSCHIK. The national liberation movement. The Bolsheviks were convinced that beginning in 1917 the Byelorussians were constantly developing strength for their national liberation. Since they could not resettle the whole Byelorussian nation at once in some foreign land they tried gradually to diminish the potential of the Byelorussian people. This was only possible through annihilating those elements that were striving for the organized independent state.

Mr. FEIGHAN. Do you feel that same spirit of healthy nationalism is just as strong in Byelorussia now as it was after the Bolsheviks first took over?

Mr. ABRAMTSCHIK. I am sure that all those people who remained alive cannot think otherwise. In every family in Byelorussia there is at least one member of the family who was destroyed or arrested for his support of the liberation movement. You cannot forget these things so fast.

The current picture as concerns Byelorussia and the other non-Russian nations in the Communist empire is one of expanding Russification, genocide, and the extinction of patriotic national forces that Moscow fears most in the event of another world war. There can be no doubt of the natural alliance of these patriotic forces with the free world.

